United Nations E/2002/SR.21

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

22 October 2002

Original: English

Substantive session for 2002
Coordination segment

Provisional summary record of the 21st meeting*
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 July 2002, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Kumalo (Vice-President) ..... (South Africa)
later: Ms. Rasi (President) ..... (Finland)

Contents

Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (*continued*)

* No summary record was issued for the 20th meeting.

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

02-47637 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (*continued*) (E/2002/12 and Corr.1, 56, 62 and 73)

General discussion (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Pashayev** (Observer for Azerbaijan) said that the new millennium presented challenges and opportunities which required enhanced international cooperation and global solutions. Although new technology and increased economic activity had produced unprecedented change, the solution of problems such as environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, conflict, terrorism, separatism and trafficking in weapons and human beings would require not only increased North-South and South-South cooperation but also a strengthened international institutional framework, in particular a modern and revitalized United Nations.

2. Unfortunately, follow-up to the Rio Conference and the Millennium Summit had been disappointing, and he expressed the hope that the Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences would mark a turning point in the implementation of conference outcomes. The Council had a vital role to play in that process by engaging all stakeholders in the implementation of measures to promote sustainable development.

3. Adequate financing for development was indispensable to the achievement of universally agreed goals in key development areas. In return, the countries receiving development assistance should take responsibility for their own development through sound economic policies, good governance and respect for human rights. The international community must also ensure the existence of open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial systems. The Council's annual meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions would lay the foundations for cooperation in those areas.

4. Given the important contribution of trade to sustainable development, he welcomed the Doha Round of trade negotiations aimed at the further liberalization of international trade. Special consideration must be given to the problems of developing countries, countries with economies in transition and least developed countries in order to integrate them into the multilateral trade system. Increased interaction between the Council and the World Trade Organization (WTO) was crucial and would strengthen the role of the Council in that process.

5. Drawing attention to the link between trade and transport, he recalled that although Azerbaijan was a landlocked developing country, it was situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. His delegation therefore hoped that the Council would play a more active role in the preparatory process for the International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Coordination, to be held in Kazakhstan in 2003.

6. The Council should be more proactive in facilitating the dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICT), which could contribute greatly to conservation and environmental protection, with a view to bridging the digital divide and making such technologies more affordable and reliable. He therefore welcomed the establishment of the ICT Task Force and the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force).

7. There was a clear link between stability, security and economic development, and in view of the violent and protracted nature of current conflicts, the international community should switch from a policy of reaction to a policy of prevention as the most desirable and cost-effective strategy for ensuring lasting peace. Consequently, cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened, since the latter, by promoting cooperation and development, contributed to global security. It must also ensure system-wide coordination of development goals through its subsidiary machinery, agencies, funds and programmes.

8. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt) said he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and stressed the importance of strengthening and revitalizing the Council as part of the overall reform of the United Nations system. As one of the Organization's principal organs, the Council should strengthen its cooperation with the General Assembly

and the Security Council. He therefore welcomed efforts such as the informal consultations on a draft resolution on an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict, which would foster a new spirit of cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Efforts to make the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly mutually supportive and effective while avoiding duplication would likewise be welcome.

9. The Council played an important coordinating role within the United Nations system, ensuring follow-up to conferences and promoting a common vision and policy framework with a view to translating conference outcomes into action. Monitoring of performance in developing countries at the national level should be complemented by monitoring of the international community's fulfilment of its commitments to support the efforts of developing countries through official development assistance (ODA), enhanced market access, technical assistance and capacity-building.

10. The annual dialogue between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, endorsed by the International Conference on Financing for Development, was a positive step towards ensuring greater coherence and consistency in the work of those institutions, as called for in the Millennium Declaration. The World Bank in particular had made efforts to work more closely with the United Nations. Increased dialogue between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO would also make the international economic environment more favourable for developing countries.

11. Turning to the Council's methods of work, he welcomed the participation of all actors in the deliberations of the Council, as provided for in its rules of procedure. If necessary, additional rules could be developed through consultations between Governments, but any such efforts should be postponed pending the system-wide evaluation undertaken by the General Assembly in the context of global partnerships. Fragmentation or shortening of the Council's substantive session might compromise the Council's political role, and he did not favour separating the humanitarian segment from the substantive session.

12. Although the Council had received a clear mandate in the Monterrey Consensus to consider follow-up in the area of financing for development, he suggested that consideration of the agenda item on integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits should take place during a resumed session of the Council, after the World Summit on Sustainable Development had been held and the Millennium development goals had been considered by the General Assembly. The Council should also help to improve the organization of the United Nations calendar by, inter alia, playing a more active oversight and management role with regard to meetings of the functional commissions, funds and programmes. It should also coordinate United Nations activities at the country level and not limit its focus to policy-level discussions at Headquarters.

13. While he took note of the concerns raised by many delegations from the North and their preference for not having automatic five- and ten-year reviews, he believed that the failure of the World Food Summit to reach any concrete outcomes and the difficulties encountered at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Bali had shown that multilateral efforts to implement the Millennium Declaration were at best in great danger and at worst an illusion. The world was watching to see whether Governments would reach the Declaration's targets on schedule and allocate the resources called for in the terms of reference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. If they did not, Johannesburg might be the last international conference for some time. That would deal a serious blow to the credibility of multilateralism and of the United Nations system itself; consequently, his delegation would do everything possible to make the World Summit a success.

14. **Mr. Shin** Boo-nam (Republic of Korea) said that one of the greatest challenges facing the Council was to promote coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. The Millennium Declaration, for example, had outlined economic and social goals around which the Council must rally the resources of the United Nations system, monitor results and conduct progress reviews in order to ensure that the ambitious targets were met. His delegation therefore welcomed the intensified dialogue between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and

WTO, and believed it would be useful to identify more specific issues for cooperation.

15. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had suggested that the Council should integrate economic, social and environmental aspects of development within the framework of sustainable development. The Council should therefore make it a priority to improve the coordination of operational activities for sustainable development and increase dialogue among its subsidiary bodies and between those bodies and the Council itself.

16. With regard to expansion of the Council's role in conflict prevention and peace-building, he welcomed the Secretary-General's call for the international community to move from a culture of reaction towards a culture of prevention. Bearing in mind the synergies between relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction and long-term development, the Council should assume a greater role in conflict prevention and peace-building. He supported the proposal for the Council to devote the high-level segment of a future substantive session to consideration of the root causes of conflict.

17. In order to respond more swiftly to global developments, the Council should introduce greater flexibility in the scheduling of its sessions; for example, his delegation would support a shortening of the July session to approximately three weeks. He also welcomed the initiative to hold, in alternate years, a high-level two-day meeting on operational activities and one on humanitarian affairs issues. Furthermore, the work of the high-level segment and the coordination segment would be enhanced if the two segments were held back to back and if a single theme or related themes were selected for both segments.

18. It was particularly important to enhance coordination and cooperation between the Council and other United Nations organs, creating a true partnership among the three primary United Nations bodies, which would include a deepening of consultations between the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council. In that connection, he welcomed the participation by the President of the Economic and Social Council in the meeting of the Security Council on Africa. In order to strengthen the relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, the Council should adjust the format of its annual report so that the Assembly could undertake more substantive discussions during its plenary meetings.

19. To encourage greater participation by the private sector in its work, especially in the light of the impact of economic globalization, the Council must disseminate its policy outcomes in a timely, effective and far-reaching manner, thus allowing them to be considered in debates and decisions at the national and international levels. The participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must likewise be increased, and he encouraged the Council to institutionalize NGO participation in the high-level segment and to review current procedures for conferring NGO consultative status. His delegation agreed that the coordination segment had been valuable in revitalizing the work of the Council, and the momentum generated by the Millennium Declaration and subsequent conferences should encourage further reform.

20. **Ms. Caridad Balaguer** (Cuba) said that the central role of the Council in dealing with global economic and social issues should be further strengthened, as should its role in ensuring follow-up to major conferences. Recent conferences had recognized the international community's responsibility for dealing with global problems, in particular those facing the developing countries. International commitments must therefore be met in order to help the developing countries eradicate all the ills that afflicted them.

21. Turning to the issue of strengthening the Economic and Social Council, she said that the coordination segment of the substantive session was the appropriate forum for integrated and coordinated analysis of the themes of major conferences with a view to ensuring follow-up. Such analysis could not, however, replace debate on follow-up to those conferences during the general segment, which drew on the reports of the functional commissions.

22. With regard to the Council's methods of work, she did not believe that the coordination segment should be held back-to-back with the high-level segment or that the two segments should share a common theme, since that would diminish the political impact of discussions in the high-level segment and might undermine the work of the coordination segment. The general segment should continue to consider the reports of the functional commissions, so that Council

members could have an opportunity to review the work of those commissions and take action on their recommendations. While the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies might be useful for reviewing the functioning of those bodies, it could not take the place of those bodies' own reports.

23. Cooperation with the other principal organs of the United Nations should continue, bearing in mind their respective mandates and recognizing the Council's role in the economic and social areas. NGOs should also continue to participate actively in the work of the Organization, and the widest possible representation of NGOs, especially from developing countries, should be ensured.

24. She was concerned that shortening the substantive session might overburden the Council during the rest of the year. Furthermore, although the Monterrey Conference had recommended that the Council should play an increased role in the follow-up to that conference through its annual meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO, that task should continue to be dealt with principally during the general segment, rather than during the coordination segment, which reviewed all conferences.

25. **Ms. Popescu Sandru** (Romania) said that strengthening the Economic and Social Council was an integral part of the process of promoting global strategies for development. The report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the Council (E/2002/62) contained a number of useful suggestions and recommendations. As part of a three-tiered mechanism for the review and follow-up to global conferences, which also included the General Assembly and the functional commissions, the Council had been assigned the task of focusing on thematic issues common to all conferences. A clear division of labour among those three entities would increase the efficiency of the mechanism, and thus her delegation supported the proposal to use the coordination segment to review the cross-cutting topics common to those conferences and summits. The Millennium development goals were a good point around which Member States, United Nations agencies and other international organizations could mobilize. The work of the Council's subsidiary bodies and the funds and programmes must also be monitored.

26. Her delegation believed that it was necessary to increase the impact of the Council's policies at the country level by improving coordination of operational activities in support of sustainable development. The Council's general guidance remained indispensable in further harmonizing and rationalizing common basic development indicators. The Council was also well-placed to forge strategic partnerships for sustainable development by bringing together national and international stakeholders. Developing the high-level dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO, civil society and the private sector was an important way in which the Council could fulfil its role as a catalyst.

27. Development, peace and stability were interrelated. Crises and conflicts consumed resources, caused instability and led to missed opportunities for development. The Council was thus faced with a new challenge: the implementation of conflict prevention and peace-building strategies, including joint consultations with the Security Council.

28. **Mr. Tupy Caldas de Moura** (Brazil) said that the creation of the ICT Task Force and the high-level meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions were two important initiatives the Council had recently launched which deserved to be highlighted. ICT was a tool for development rather than a reward, and the Task Force should help to narrow the digital divide. The meetings between the international financial institutions and the Council had gained even greater relevance after the Monterrey Conference, where the need for close cooperation had become evident. The Council had also enhanced its cooperation with civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

29. In providing integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations summits and conferences, it was important to avoid duplication and tap into potential synergies. However, the coordination exercise should not come at the expense of follow-up to individual conferences. It was also important to improve cooperation between the Council and other principal organs and the oversight of its subsidiary machinery. There must be greater coherence between the agenda of the Council and that of the General Assembly, the Second and Third Committees in particular, and cooperation with the Security Council in such areas as post-conflict peace-building should be considered.

30. In order to accomplish its coordination tasks, the Council must improve its working methods. The high-level segment had succeeded in drawing attention, but that was unfortunately not true for the other segments. The coordination segment could concentrate on follow-up to major conferences and summits. The operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments could also consider holding high-level meetings at a time other than the substantive session, which would attract more attention without overburdening its agenda. Finally, the general segment could concentrate on the reports of subsidiary bodies. Such measures would strengthen the Council and contribute to the achievement of the goals established by the major conferences, but they would not succeed unless they were supported by strong political will.

31. **Mr. Amman** (Observer for Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Council had to act as a catalyst by bringing together all actors in the implementation of the outcome of major conferences; it must also ensure that globalization became a positive force for all. Those challenges required the Council to function in a more flexible, innovative and timely manner. Lessons learned and best practices should be taken into consideration, and strategic partnerships among the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO should be enhanced.

32. The issue of coordinated follow-up to the major conferences and summits should become a standing item on the agenda of the coordination segment. In addition, a cross-cutting theme should be identified for the high-level segment, which would further enhance implementation of conference outcomes. Further review of the current format, purpose and scope of coordination meetings was needed, as was a more ambitious agenda for the annual high-level meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions. Dialogue and consultation should be shifted from principles to implementation and action. His delegation therefore supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to intensify the intergovernmental preparatory process for those meetings, which should have an agreed agenda.

33. In the follow-up to the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, the key challenge to the Council would be to enhance its coordination role while integrating the economic, social and environmental aspects of the outcome into the topics for the various segments of its sessions. The Council should promote the mainstreaming of the concept of sustainability in the work of the United Nations system.

34. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that his delegation agreed with the general views expressed during the discussion of the role and functions of the Council and also on the need to continue and pursue the reform process. It supported the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report (E/2002/62), in particular the suggestion to shorten the length of the substantive session. Those proposals should be considered in conjunction with the review of the decision-making process within the Council, which must become more flexible. Although consensus was the preferred method, it could lead to a repetition of texts agreed at other conferences or summits, creating an illusion of progress when none had actually been made.

35. The Council should play a more active role in peace-building and conflict prevention, which would not be possible under current conditions. The reform process must therefore continue and, in particular, sessions should be made more flexible. In that connection, his Government commended the efforts of the Secretariat to develop a long-term programme of support for Haiti (E/2002/56). His Government would contribute to the reform of the Council, which it considered essential in creating the conditions for achievement of the goals set at the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Conference.

36. **Mr. Langmore** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, given the extent and severity of human deprivation, the enormity of the inequities in income, wealth and access to political power and the vulnerability of increasingly integrated global economic and social systems to disorder and instability, the potential importance of the Council's role was greater than ever. However, the unsatisfactory chasm between purpose and performance meant that revitalization was essential.

37. The main problem was that the Council did not address global economic and social issues decisively or in a timely way. One way to increase its effectiveness would be to hold meetings during the year whenever they were needed, in order to maximize the timeliness of response. The annual meetings with the Bretton Woods institutions would be more interesting if

specific issues were discussed and would have more value if held before the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

38. One of the goals set in the Charter for both the Organization and the Council was full employment, yet that goal received too little attention on the international scene. One way to remedy that would be to include ILO among the agencies participating in the special high-level meetings. The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, established by ILO in 2002, would be available by the end of 2003 and would provide an ideal theme for the high-level segment to be held in July 2004. Employment growth was sufficiently important to become one of the Council's central concerns.

39. **Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that UNIDO was eager to intensify its cooperation with the Council by making its analytical resources more fully available. The United Nations system would benefit from more effective orchestration of its analytical capacity so that resources for background documentation could be exploited on the basis of comparative advantage. The success of the International Conference on Financing for Development was due largely to an inclusive participatory process that had drawn on the best available input from various stakeholders, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, the private sector and civil society. It was thus a matter of concern that the Secretary-General's recommendations for Conference follow-up (E/2002/62, paras. 40-43) made no reference to the participation of specialized agencies. However, the proposal to hold joint meetings or exchanges with the boards of specialized agencies and funds and programmes to discuss follow-up of the Millennium Declaration, Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit (para. 62) was most welcome, as was the proposal to create a "development cooperation forum" (para. 65).

40. The Council had an important role to play in bringing together the various development constituencies. However, since the practicalities of integrated follow-up to major conferences were too complex, the Council should focus at each of its sessions on a few critical issues pre-selected by the Secretariat.

41. UNIDO was particularly keen to assist in the establishment of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict and to share its experience in that area.

42. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) welcomed the improvements that had been made in the Council's functioning but said it was important to pursue the revitalization process with a sense of renewed urgency. The Council must cease to be a debating forum and should start to lead global efforts for sustainable development, poverty eradication and peace. Procedural bottlenecks and structural impediments remained, and the Council must be equipped with the tools and authority it needed to fulfil its mandate.

43. Several ideas for further strengthening the Council had emerged from the Secretary-General's report and from the panel discussions. For example, need, rather than convenience, should dictate the number of meetings, which should be short and focused. The Council should also be able to meet at short notice, and the Bureau should be given added authority to act on its behalf. Collaboration with the Security Council and the General Assembly must be based on agreed modi operandi to avoid confusion and duplication. Moreover, the Council should provide leadership in the follow-up to international conferences by offering policy guidance and coordinating the efforts of multiple stakeholders, including the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO. It should also be involved in broadly monitoring implementation. The Council must also ensure that its conclusions were reflected in the policies and strategies of collaborating agencies.

44. Global development compacts were waiting to be implemented, calling for energy and resources and the harnessing of existing mechanisms, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. At the Council's sessions, thematic round tables and panel discussions should be more focused. There should also be more emphasis on thematic and cross-cutting issues so that policy and field inputs could be more effectively articulated. Although change was needed in the architecture of the Council's substantive sessions, the existing frequency of sessions should be preserved and greater linkage between segments ensured.

45. **Mr. Husain** (Organization of the Islamic Conference) said that certain coordination issues

described in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2002/62) were pertinent to his own organization. The gap between policy guidance and the day-to-day work of the United Nations system at the national level struck a particular chord. The question of how the Council's work could be made more efficient was thus one of mutual concern.

46. Intergovernmental organizations such as his own could enrich the Council's comprehensive reviews of progress in follow-up to major United Nations summits and conferences by sharing their own experience in that regard. The Council might also consider more effective roles for relevant intergovernmental organizations to complement its work in their areas of competence.

47. He wished to reiterate his organization's interest in contributing to the implementation of the Secretary-General's proposals towards improving coordination between the Council and intergovernmental organizations.

48. **Ms. Bloem** (Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)) welcomed the Secretary-General's emphasis on moving from commitments to implementation and said that the Council was the right body to coordinate follow-up to the major conferences. It should also remain a strong advocate for social concerns and ensure that human rights were a firm underpinning for development goals.

49. Civil society organizations had made a substantial contribution to the formulation and adoption of the Millennium Declaration and should be fully involved in all follow-up mechanisms. CONGO had organized activities to mobilize NGOs to that end at the regional, national and grass-roots levels.

50. In order to overcome widespread scepticism, particularly among civil society, that United Nations goals were being set but never met, she recommended that the Council should use the Millennium development goals as an important framework for its development agenda but identify more immediate goals and targets that could be achieved within current political mandates. Civil society should also be included in the awareness-raising campaign and ongoing monitoring process for the Millennium goals.

51. To ensure policy coherence and give the Council more authority, the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO should be brought into the United Nations system and their reporting to the Council made both mandatory and accountable.

52. The Council should also become more involved in the prevention of armed conflict, including by establishing the proposed advisory group on African countries. Some NGOs had recommended that the Council should also be more proactive by intervening and protecting against armed conflict and terrorism, establishing specific programmes against the negative effects of globalization, taking strong positions against corruption and better promoting itself to NGOs and the world. It would also help strengthen the Council if the terms of Office of the President and Bureau were extended. The Council might also consider establishing a "mediation committee" to act in the event that decisions from one United Nations body appeared to conflict with decisions from others, or to set priorities between various human rights.

53. It was the mutual desire of the Council and the NGOs in consultative status with it that nominal or formal relationships should be enhanced to achieve genuine consultation. The involvement of CONGO and other NGOs in the preparation and realization of the high-level segment was most welcome in that connection. Similar modalities should also, however, be applied to other segments. Strengthening NGO participation strengthened the Council, since it created a stronger link with the peoples of the world. Accordingly, the Council should seek NGO input more actively. It should also be more authoritative in r..aking its rules for NGO participation applicable to all meetings within the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.